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Official Records

Fifty-first Session

60th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 19 November 1996, 3.00 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 50 (*continued*)

Report of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the third annual report of the International Tribunal (A/51/292)

Mr. Gorelik (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian Federation attaches great importance to the activities of the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which was established by a decision of the Security Council. The Tribunal was established because the bitter armed conflict in the region had been accompanied by blatant breaches of international humanitarian law, the responsibility for which is borne by individuals on all sides. All such persons, irrespective of ethnic affiliation or official position, must be subject to punishment for their deeds in order to meet the requirements of justice and in the interests of restoring lasting peace to the region.

The Tribunal has been obliged to carry out its mandate under difficult conditions. It is facing a number of complex and, in some cases, unprecedented legal, organizational and financial problems. As we have seen from the matter of the false testimony recently identified in the Tadic trial, there have been clear attempts to manipulate the activities of the Tribunal. These call for heightened vigilance on the part of the Prosecutor and the Judges. However, we note that with experience many difficulties are gradually being overcome. Taken as a whole, the Tribunal's procedures are still far from being perfected. We are certain, however, that the remaining problems will be successfully overcome and that the Tribunal will exhibit complete impartiality in its work.

The Russian delegation is grateful to the President of the International Tribunal, Mr. Cassese, for his timely and extensive statement on the report of the Tribunal. Among other things, we note that Judge Cassese deemed it necessary to devote particular attention to the question of impartiality in the work of the Tribunal. We believe that this aim is entirely justified and that it is important to continue to remove any grounds for accusing that body of international justice of bias. To that end, a number of additional practical steps will be necessary.

In particular, the situation with regard to mass graves in Bosnia gives rise to puzzling questions. Although a number of sites have been found throughout the country, the relevant investigations are being conducted almost exclusively on the territory of Republika Srpska. It is only there that exhumations are being performed. It is only there that, in accordance with the recommendations of the Tribunal, mass gravesites are being placed under guard by the multinational force. In our view, this kind of one-sidedness, which casts a shadow over the Tribunal's work requires immediate rectification.

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Another serious problem in the work of the Tribunal is the insufficient level of cooperation from States and Entities in the region of the former Yugoslavia. As is clear from the report and from Judge Cassese's statement, all parties without exception, are at fault to some degree. The Security Council has already been compelled seriously to address this issue on several occasions.

As a result of efforts that have been undertaken, the situation is gradually changing for the better. A number of important steps, including those of a legislative nature, have been taken by the Federation and Croatia although, as is noted in the report, the cooperation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and Republika Srpska remains restricted and insufficient. We believe that the opening of a mission of the Tribunal in Belgrade and the recent visit to The Hague of the Minister of Justice of the Republika Srpska should be welcomed.

As far as we know, in the course of this visit, the Tribunal was provided with material on crimes perpetrated against the Serb population and a request was made to begin the relevant investigations, including those on a number of sites of mass graves. Thus, we must assume that the problem raised in Judge Cassese's statement regarding the provision to the Tribunal of a data base for investigating crimes against the Serbs has been largely solved. We presume that a rapid response to the legitimate requests of the Minister of Justice of the Republika Srpska will play a key role in stimulating the cooperation of the Bosnian Serbs.

In conclusion, I would briefly touch on the role and place of the Tribunal in our overall efforts to settle the conflict in the region of the former Yugoslavia. We are convinced that the Tribunal, as an international legal body, should be entirely free from outside influences and political considerations. On the other hand, as was noted by Mr. Cassese, ignoring the overall political context does not appear to be possible. We believe this assessment to be fair in the sense that the activity of the Tribunal must help to restore peace in the region by adopting a balanced and considered approach to implementing the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council.

Mr. Escovar-Salom (Venezuela) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The International Tribunal dealing with crimes perpetrated in the course of the Yugoslav crisis was established in response to an international need. It was created to fill a vacuum in international law and to defend values of culture and civilization and international law.

As Chairman of the Sixth Committee, I feel the statements that have been made today are enormously important, given their impact on the future of international legality.

The President of the Tribunal, Mr. Cassese, and other speakers today have expressed views, opinions and experiences that must be taken into account if we are to build a better, more efficient and far-reaching international order in which we can place our trust, so that the atrocities we witnessed in the former Yugoslavia shall never be repeated.

We have principles to defend, but now we must simply accumulate experiences such as those described today in this debate. Whatever can be said either for or against the experience that began with the establishment of the International Tribunal will be useful to the international community and the future development of international law. It is important to test and perfect this experiment if we wish to enhance the credibility of international institutions.

I do not wish at this time to address the very important specific aspects mentioned by the President of the Tribunal and other speakers today. I wish only to focus on the importance of this experience to the creation and strengthening of future international institutions.

Today, the Sixth Committee is undertaking the preparatory work for the planned international criminal court. The creation of that institution is very important and the experience that we are gaining today in the case of Yugoslavia will thus be useful in the future.

Mr. Khan (Pakistan): We would like to convey our profound appreciation to Judge Antonio Cassese, the President of the International Tribunal, for his outstanding success in assembling and operationalizing the entire normative and logistical infrastructure of the Tribunal in a period of two years. Given the financial constraints, it is indeed a commendable achievement.

It is an obligation of the international community to stem grave violations of human rights in situations in which crimes against humanity — including genocide, "ethnic cleansing" and the use of rape and sexual abuse as instruments of war — have been committed with impunity. The international community should intervene in such situations to stop the perpetrators of these crimes from pursuing their dark agenda. Once the immediate threat of these crimes has been removed, it is incumbent

on the international community to prosecute those who are responsible for the crimes. It is imperative that the principles of international prosecution and individual responsibility be upheld in all circumstances to maintain a civilized world order.

In this context, the most poignant case is that of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the crimes of aggression, "ethnic cleansing" and massacres were committed. The international community rose to this challenge by establishing a Tribunal. For the effective functioning of the Tribunal, the Council prescribed that all States should cooperate with the Tribunal. It is only natural that those responsible for these crimes are the ones undermining the effectiveness of the Tribunal through delay or obfuscation. We must not allow this to happen. We must not allow the non-implementation of Security Council resolutions in pursuance of vested interests. Non-compliance with Security Council resolutions erodes the authority of this body and makes a mockery of the principles enshrined in the Charter.

The impressive strides made by the Tribunal have been tempered by the lack of cooperation from States and entities of the former Yugoslavia. The signatories to the Dayton Accord have formally recognized and undertaken to allow freedom of movement and provide unrestricted access to sites and persons, and exclude indictees from public office.

Despite these undertakings, certain States have refused to comply with the arrest warrants issued by the Tribunal and have not even responded to the Tribunal to explain the reasons for their non-compliance. This is a blatant violation of Security Council resolutions, the Dayton Accord and the Statute of the Tribunal. The persons indicted for genocide have remained in official positions. One State has even failed to take the most elementary step of enacting legislation to enable it to cooperate with the Tribunal, a mandatory measure under Security Council resolution 827 (1993). Others, despite their "acknowledged authority", have failed to investigate and prosecute serious violations of international humanitarian law. In certain cases, attempts have been made to destroy the evidence.

We are grateful to the President of the Tribunal for sharing his views candidly with Member States. He has rightly identified some disturbing trends that are undermining the very purpose of the Tribunal. The main stumbling-blocks are the realities of international politics in the post-Dayton period. Attempts are being made to appease the aggressors. The United Nations cannot go back on its pledge to prosecute and punish the offenders on the pretext of political exigencies.

The President of the Tribunal has termed the persistent lack of cooperation by some States and entities of the former Yugoslavia and their non-compliance with the injunctions of the Tribunal as the most insurmountable difficulty. Those States that committed atrocities in the first place are trying to protect the criminals through different legal stratagems. An extraneous and legally invalid argument of the so-called prohibition of extradition to other States under the national Constitution is being put forward. We fully agree with the President of the Tribunal that the surrender of the indictees, required under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, has nothing to do with extradition to other States. In this particular case, States cannot claim immunity from extradition of the indictees. They will have to comply with international legal obligations. In this case, if we allowed States to hide behind the fiction of their national legislation, we would be paving the way for international anarchy.

We also endorse the President of the Tribunal's observation that the Tribunal was created to dispense victims' justice and not to do the victors justice.

It has been rightly pointed out that the Tribunal does not have an enforcement agency. Unlike Governments, it does not have an executive branch. It is here that the collective will of the international community and the political weight of the Security Council should ensure faithful implementation of the decisions as regards the functioning of the Tribunal.

We have full confidence in the impartiality of the Tribunal. All allegations against the Tribunal cited by its President in his statement are either baseless or motivated. There is no bias against the Serbs. If the indictees are in Serbia and Montenegro, the Tribunal has to serve notices and expect compliance. The Tribunal would prosecute individuals, but it must not be forgotten that those individuals were supported by authorities and an elaborate State apparatus. The most gruesome crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina were committed in pursuance of a systematic policy by the aggressors.

According to the report by the President of the Tribunal, the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been by far the most cooperative party — apparently, the only country that is committed to achieving the goals of peace, security and stability in the region. To promote

peace in the region, we must ensure full and timely implementation of all aspects of the arrangements agreed among the parties to the conflict.

The international community must reject a proposal from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and Republika Srpska that those persons already accused by the Tribunal be tried in their own territories. Clearly, it is an attempt to justify their refusal to surrender them to the Tribunal. Such a manoeuvre would violate the Tribunal's primacy and infringe Security Council resolutions and the Dayton Accord.

The persistent refusal by certain States to surrender indictees for trial would defeat the very aim of Security Council resolutions and rekindle the flames of aggression and persecution. We should not acquiesce in such illegal conduct. Appropriate action should be taken to compel recalcitrant States to cooperate with the Tribunal.

Let us uphold the principle of justice. Let us not allow the compulsions of *realpolitik* to sabotage our own historic decision. The victims' rights must be protected. The offenders must be punished under the law. Let us support the international order that we are trying to create.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 50?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 30

Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/380 and Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/51/L.8)

The President: I now call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.8.

Mr. Al-Attar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): As Syria assumes the chairmanship of the Arab Group for this month, I am honoured to introduce, on behalf of the member countries of the League of Arab States, the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.8, which is being submitted to the fifty-first session of the General Assembly under agenda item 30 on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States".

The United Nations and the League of Arab States, established at about the same time, were an expression of the hopes of peoples for a better world following the suffering and the scourge of the Second World War. At the time, that independent Arab States joined the United Nations to attempt, through cooperation with other States, to bring about that future to which their peoples so strongly aspired.

The Arab States also had the will to cooperate among themselves to assist those Arab peoples that were still living under colonialism, as well as to develop regional cooperation in order to achieve a better future for their peoples and a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The links between the United Nations and the League of Arab States are, in fact, an exemplar of the cooperation and integration between this international Organization and regional organizations, as called for in Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. The relationship between the two organizations, as shown in their common history, is based on the shared principles and purposes of their two charters. They were cast in the same mould, and place international peace and security at the top of the agenda.

In the context of the close cooperation between the League of Arab States, as a regional organization, and the United Nations, I should like to stress that the Arab States — in many international forums, specifically, at the Arab Summit Conference, which was held from 21 to 23 June 1996 at Cairo, and in statements in this Assembly — have repeatedly expressed their concern that the peace process should continue, in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, and as a strategic choice and option to be secured through the legitimacy of the international community.

But, for strategic peace to be achieved there must be a balanced peace formula. This requires a concomitant commitment that Israel must reaffirm seriously and unreservedly. It also calls for an effort to resume the peace process according to its statutes and on the basis of the Madrid Conference and the principle of land for

peace. It must be resumed from the point reached during the previous Israeli Administration.

We believe that we must continue to promote cooperation between the League of Arab States and the United Nations, now more than ever, in order to achieve an honourable peace with dignity for the peoples; a peace which brings security and cooperation; a peace which creates an environment conducive to development and stability in the region and throughout the world. In this way, we shall work together to attain the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

The preambular part of the draft resolution before us (A/51/L.8) expresses a strong desire to develop the links between the United Nations and the League of Arab States in all spheres of activity. This part also looks forward to further cooperation between the two organizations in order to promote the purposes and principles of the Charter. The final preambular paragraph welcomes the second meeting on cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, held on 15 and 16 February 1996 at Vienna.

The operative part takes note with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General, commends the continued efforts of the League of Arab States to promote multilateral cooperation among Arab States, and requests the United Nations system to continue to lend its support in this framework. It takes account of the results and recommendations of the Vienna meeting that I have just mentioned. It expresses appreciation to the Secretary-General for the follow-up action taken by him to implement the proposals of meetings between League of Arab States and United Nations secretariats over the years.

In general, the operative part of the draft resolution calls for further cooperation and links between the United Nations and the League of Arab States, as well as between their respective specialized organizations, in order to obtain greater results in the economic and social fields, which in turn are multifaceted and have many objectives.

Proceeding from this, paragraph 10 recommends that the next general meeting between representatives of the United Nations system and the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations be held during 1997.

Paragraph 11 requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session a progress report on the implementation of the draft resolution.

At their last meeting, held at Cairo on 15 September 1996, Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs, expressed their appreciation for efforts by Arab organizations to support and promote the programme of cooperation with the United Nations. They called for further efforts to develop and support the programme of cooperation between the League of Arab States and the United Nations, which accords with the Arab view point. They also called for intensifying Arab efforts to prepare for the next meeting between the secretariats of the League of Arab States, the United Nations and specialized agencies, to be held next year.

Support for the League of Arab States during this decisive and serious period in the Middle East — a period characterized by the failure to achieve a just and comprehensive peace — is a noble objective which ought to obtain full support from all members of the international community. Adoption by consensus of the draft resolution before the General Assembly would be a clear expression of international support for that objective.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 477 (V) of 1 November 1950, I now call on the observer for the League of Arab States.

Mr. Aboul-Nasr (League of Arab States) (*interpretation from Arabic*): As this is my first opportunity to address the General Assembly this session, I should like to open my statement by sincerely congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. Your election to that high post is an expression of confidence in you personally, and also reflects the international community's appreciation of your friendly country, Malaysia.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/51/380), which is before the General Assembly today, describes the current multifaceted cooperation between the United Nations, the League of Arab States and their specialized agencies and organizations. The report also discusses some examples of that cooperation, particularly in the recent past, in many fields of cooperation between the two organizations. May I pay tribute here to the ongoing consultations, contacts and dialogue between the two organizations on all levels. The report before the Assembly mentions the working visit of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Cairo headquarters of the League of Arab States, where he was received by its Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States also looks forward to attending the sessions of the United Nations General Assembly each year and to meeting with the Secretary-General and the many officials within the Organization to exchange views. Such visits, coupled with the regular meetings, reaffirm the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations on cooperation with regional organizations. These meetings between the organizations and their officials allow for a review of a wide range of international issues as well as cooperation in solving many international and regional problems.

I should like to express the League of Arab States' appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to all his assistants for their efforts to promote cooperation between the organizations and for the continuing exchange of views and consultations. We also appreciate the efforts being made to implement the agreements already reached between the two bodies, since the first meeting, held in Tunisia in 1983, until the most recent one between the two organizations and their specialized agencies, held in Vienna in 1995.

The League of Arab States looks forward to the meeting scheduled for 1997, in accordance with resolution 50/16, adopted by the General Assembly at its previous session and reaffirmed in the draft resolution (A/51/L.8) just introduced by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on behalf of the League of Arab States. That meeting is to be devoted to cooperation in all fields between the United Nations and the League of Arab States and their specialized agencies in order to review ways and means to expand coordination between the two organizations. It will also review the implementation of joint projects and programmes aimed at achieving the objectives of the charters of the two bodies, implementing their resolutions and bringing about a just and durable peace in the region.

The world today finds itself in a new, delicate and sensitive political situation. There is a need, therefore, to strengthen the United Nations and respect of its Charter, enhance its effectiveness and implement its resolutions in order to maintain international peace and security. We would like here to reaffirm the full support of the League of Arab States for the historic Declaration adopted last year by Kings, Presidents and Heads of State and Government on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

The League of Arab States, a regional organization of 22 member countries, is ready to contribute to the translation of the noble principles expressed in that historic Declaration into a clear programme of action that takes into account the interests of the States and peoples of the world, without discrimination or double standards.

The League of Arab States is following very closely the sincere efforts made by the United Nations and its Secretary-General to address the many problems and tragedies affecting various parts of the world. These attempts are continuing despite the challenges facing the United Nations today. The League of Arab States once again reaffirms its interest in supporting such efforts and its willingness to do all it can to cooperate with the United Nations.

Efforts to resolve the question of Palestine and the problems created by the continuing Israeli occupation of Arab land are a priority concern of the League of Arab States. The Council of the League of Arab States at its latest session, held in September, reaffirmed the need to achieve a just and durable peace and to resume the peace process on the basis of internationally binding resolutions such as Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the principles on which they were based, particularly the principle of land for peace. Furthermore, the resolutions of the Council of the League of Arab States call for respect and implementation, without further delay, of the agreements reached in this regard until a comprehensive peace is achieved. Unfortunately, current conditions in the region do not give rise to optimism, particularly in the light of Israel's continuing attempt to renege on previously signed agreements.

Israel's continuing violations, which inflame religious sentiments, its refusal to withdraw from occupied territories, its plans to build more settlements and its other illegal acts are an obstacle to peace. The League of Arab States calls on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and fulfil its role of moving the peace process forward on the just bases agreed by the United Nations. We hope that this opportunity to achieve a just and durable peace will not be lost, so that we can look forward to cooperation and development. This cannot happen until people's rights are restored and until peace and confidence reign among the States of the region.

In conclusion, I should like to stress that the support of the League of Arab States for the United Nations stems from its members' resolve and commitment to the principles of the Charter and its noble objectives, as well

as from our desire as a regional organization to continue to cooperate in all areas with this international Organization. All these objectives are reflected in the draft resolution before you today, which I hope will be adopted by consensus.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.8.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.8?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 51/20).

The President: I shall now call on a representative who wishes to make a statement in explanation of vote. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Rubinstein (Israel): The delegation of Israel has joined the consensus on the resolution just adopted. In so doing, we were guided by the desire to make peace with all of our neighbours, all of whom are members of the League of Arab States. Israel has joined consensus on this item for the last three years. During the past year, additional progress has been made in the peace process. Israel undertook to implement the Interim Agreement, which we signed with the Palestinians. To this end, the Israeli Defence Forces have been redeployed from six of the large Arab cities on the West Bank, and Palestinians throughout the territories have assumed responsibility for their own affairs, including internal security, public order and all other aspects of their daily lives. Israel has established formal relations with additional members of the League of Arab States. We opened interests offices with Tunisia and Mauritania, after having opened one with Morocco in 1994. In addition, trade and representation offices have been opened in Oman and Qatar.

Peace and economic cooperation are intimately linked. Just as we are committed to peace, so are we equally committed to strengthening regional economic ties. We have been encouraged by steps taken to lift economic boycotts, such as last year's decision of the Gulf Cooperation Council to lift the secondary boycott against Israel. We had hoped that these positive developments would find expression within the framework of the League of Arab States. The time has come for the members of the League to take further measures to eliminate altogether their boycott against Israel. As a first step in this direction, the League of Arab States could adopt a decision similar to that taken by the Gulf Cooperation Council.

This month, the third Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit was held in Cairo, Egypt, under the patronage of President Mubarak. The goals of the Summit were to facilitate the expansion of private sector investment in the region, to cement a public-private partnership to ensure that end, and to work to enhance regional cooperation and development. Business leaders from Israel, from many Arab States and from Muslim countries outside the region met at the Summit and concluded a number of deals that will help to augment the productive capacity of the region and contribute to its broad-based economic development.

In addition, it was agreed last year to establish in Cairo a Bank for Economic Cooperation and Development in the Middle East and North Africa, and this year preparations are under way for the Bank's first activities. Israel welcomes the Bank's establishment, with which we will cooperate and assist out of our desire to encourage the general development of the States in our region.

Israel supports cooperation between the United Nations and various regional organizations, including the League of Arab States. Indeed, this cooperation is based on provisions of the United Nations Charter. In this context, it is regrettable that Israel still does not belong to a regional group at the United Nations owing to the political objections of some Member States. Israel calls upon the members of the League of Arab States to lift their objections to the admission of Israel to the Asian Group. The fact that Israel is currently denied membership in any regional group directly contradicts the basic principle of the universality of the United Nations.

Israel takes this opportunity to call for increased cooperation between the United Nations Development Programme and the League of Arab States for the establishment of joint projects within the framework of regional agricultural development in the areas under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Council. With regard to cooperation between the World Bank and the League of Arab States, Israel recommends the examination, as soon as possible, of the Bank's financing of the economic development projects of the Palestinian Council. Israel feels that the Arab world must provide a greater share of aid to the Palestinian Council, to match the aid given by the European Union, Norway, Japan and the United States. Israel welcomes all efforts to advance the socio-

economic, educational, health and cultural standing of the Palestinian residents of the territories, within this framework of participation between the League of Arab States and United Nations agencies.

This is the first resolution on an issue related to the Middle East to be adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. We are pleased that the resolution was adopted by consensus, and hope that more draft resolutions related to the region will be adopted through the same procedure. However, in order to ensure that that happens, all parties should exercise restraint and refrain from submitting controversial draft resolutions that parties on one side of the peace negotiations would find impossible to support.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

May I take it that it the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 30?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 40

The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/338)

Draft resolution (A/51/L.18)

The President: I call on the representative of Costa Rica to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.18.

Mr. Carreras (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before introducing the draft resolution on the situation in Central America, I should like, on behalf of the Government of Costa Rica, to extend condolences to the delegations of Zambia and the Maldives upon the passing of Mr. Paul Lusaka and Ambassador Ahmed Zaki.

On behalf of the delegations of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, I wish to greet you, Mr. President, and convey to you our appreciation for your successful guidance of our work during this session of the General Assembly. You can be sure, Sir, of the steadfast support of the delegations of the countries of Central America in your important work.

I should like to take this opportunity to convey to the Secretary-General our best wishes for the success of his outstanding work in the Secretariat of this Organization. Central America is very grateful for the constant support of the Secretary-General in the process of consolidating peace and democracy, and for his active and determined participation in our efforts to transform the Central American isthmus into a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development. The best evidence of this support can be found in the valuable report of the Secretary-General (A/51/338), submitted to the General Assembly on 9 September 1996.

In 1986 — 10 years ago — Central America had reached a crucial point. The long peace negotiations, conducted by the Central American countries under the sympathetic mediation of our brother nations of the Contadora Group, were at a difficult stage. Notwithstanding the constant efforts and encouragement of our brothers from Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela, the crisis in our region had reached such a point that a halt in the process had become necessary to enable the Central American countries themselves, after some soul-searching, to analyse the situation and take the decisions necessary to achieve a prompt, stable and lasting peace.

In 1986, thanks to the initiative of the Government of Guatemala, the Presidents of the five Central American countries met in the symbolic and hospitable city of Esquipulas. A true process of pacification and democratization thus began which, under the leadership of the Central Americans themselves, and through a free and sovereign exercise, created a procedure for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in Central America. This procedure, generally known as the Esquipulas II agreement, resulted from the will of the Central American Governments and the support of the international community, and established a series of commitments in the areas of democracy, peace and national reconciliation.

The armed conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador were ended through negotiation and political dialogue, as well as through free and pluralist elections in Central America. The armed conflict in Guatemala has ceased, and we all anticipate a definitive peace agreement in that brother country towards the end of this year.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In 1996, the Central American region is living in peace and democracy. Our societies have reconciled themselves of their own accord, choosing their leaders through free and fair elections, in an indisputable exercise of freedom and pluralism and within the framework of respect for the rule of law. During this past year, the citizens of Nicaragua and Guatemala have elected new democratic leaders through free and pluralist electoral processes, in the context of respect for popular will and in the presence of international observers.

We in Central America have understood that progress made in the areas of peace and democracy must be secured. Our own experience has proved that national reconciliation and the cessation of armed conflicts can be consolidated only through a genuine political commitment to economic development and social justice. We must keep in mind the painful truth that the last decade of conflicts in Central America were caused by centuries-old social and economic inequities, which fuelled the peoples' discontent. From this sad experience, we in Central America have become fully aware of the need to guarantee and consolidate peace and reconciliation through concrete actions in favour of development and the well-being of peoples.

Thus, our efforts for the consolidation of peace have been directed towards the redefinition of our own processes of national and regional development. We understand that our strength lies primarily in the unity and integration of our political, economic and social processes. With these goals in mind, we redefined our old integration system and have established the Central American Integration System (SICA), which constitutes, as the Esquipulas II agreement did, an authentic and specific conception of communal organization. The Central American Integration System has allowed the Central American countries to make definite progress in the establishment of a real institutional mechanism for regional harmonization and cooperation. We Central Americans proudly affirm that never before have we worked together as we do now with our own mechanisms and institutions.

This effort, which was embodied in the Tegucigalpa Protocol and which will be five years old in December, has been complemented by the addition of the Guatemala Protocol to the General Treaty on Central American Economic Integration, the Statute of the Central American Court of Justice and the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security. All of these communal legal instruments have extended and consolidated the institutional structure for the new Central American integration.

In this context, the Central American Governments attach particular importance to the effective functioning of SICA and have therefore established a system that monitors its operation and functionality, with consistent support from the Inter-American Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Secondly, we Central Americans, have learned that the consolidation of peace and democracy in our region requires redefining our national and regional development model so as to harmonize our efforts with new international realities. Since 1994, the Central American Governments have promoted and defined, from a common perspective, a new proposal for national and regional development, which is embodied in the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America, adopted in Managua on 13 October 1994, and was further developed in the Masaya commitments and at the International Conference for Peace and Development, held in Tegucigalpa.

Bearing in mind the development concepts put forward by the United Nations in the context of the Rio summit, we Central Americans have defined and established our Alliance, which provides an integral and sustainable framework in the political, economic, social, environmental and cultural areas, with the participation of civil society. As the Secretary-General points out in paragraph 14 of the aforementioned report, this Alliance "is an ambitious and comprehensive initiative".

We in Central America are aware of this and have therefore united all our efforts, under presidential leadership, to take definitive and unquestionable steps to implement the initiative. The presidential summits held in Costa del Sol, San Pedro Sula and Montelimar during the last 12 months were milestones in the implementation of the Alliance, through the establishment of strategic priorities in the general framework of the commitments entered into in 1994.

In the same vein, the Central American Governments have begun a process of study and analysis of the definition of Central America's terms of incorporation and participation in the new global order of economic and commercial international relations. The goal is to establish, through the identification of our competitive advantages, a new strategy for regional integration in the overall international economic order.

Central America, with its new system of communal organization and with its own model of sustainable development, participates as one entity in extraregional arrangements, with the goal of promoting the progress and well-being of its population. In recent years we have developed systems that link us with the European Union, Mexico and the United States. The Central American Integration System is an observer at the United Nations, and we have recently established new mechanisms for dialogue with Chile, Japan and the Republic of Korea. We are hopeful that these dialogues will soon bear fruit.

In 1996, the Central American countries can proudly show the international community that peace and democracy are indeed achievable in the wake of armed conflicts. Central America is a successful model for the settlement of conflicts and the establishment of peace. Even though, as I mentioned before, this was accomplished by the Central American people themselves, the organized international community played a significant role. Without extraregional support and cooperation, it would be difficult to speak of the consolidation and sustainability of the Central American process. The success of the Central American peace process is thus also an achievement of the international community and of this Organization in particular.

In this regard, I should like to quote the excellent report of the Secretary-General:

> "The countries of Central America continue to stress the importance of the role played by the international community in promoting their peace, freedom, democracy and development. At a time of pressing demands for international assistance, they have insisted on the need for this support to be maintained if the progress made in recent years is to be consolidated." *(A/51/338, para. 19)*

Indeed, in recent years, international participation and support for the Central American process, led by the United Nations and the Organization of American States, has been fundamental.

Let me recall the key role played by the United Nations Observer Group in Central America during the first stage of the peace process known as Esquipulas II; the work done first by the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador and later by the Mission of the United Nations in El Salvador in verifying implementation of the peace accords in El Salvador; and the steadfast labour of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala in the current stage of the peace process in Guatemala.

Similarly, the broad participation of this Organization in cooperation for the development of Latin America has been important, as evidenced by the work of the Special Plan of Economic Cooperation for Central America and, later, by the Programme for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees (PRODERE). It is also particularly gratifying to acknowledge the role of the Organization in supporting the reconstruction of Nicaragua and El Salvador, in which the United Nations Development Programme has been a key protagonist.

In this new stage of the Central American process, there are areas which, in the view of the countries of the region, are key to the consolidation and implementation of the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America. First, in the political arena, it is important to support the rule of law and respect for human rights by strengthening judicial systems and human rights advocates. In this regard, support for programmes to improve tax collection is also important.

Secondly, regarding social issues, it is essential to support programmes to eradicate poverty and extreme poverty, with special emphasis on the issues of equity and the productive transformation and participation of civil society and women. Thirdly, on environmental issues, the promotion of sustainable development at the local level and the protection and maintenance of natural resources are also very important.

The support of the Organization and its Member States for the priorities we have mentioned is of particular interest to the Central American countries. Accordingly, I take this opportunity to request the Assembly's invaluable support for the cooperation programmes which the United Nations is already implementing in this area. We understand that this effort must include an increase in existing coordination within the various programmes and agencies of the United Nations systems.

On behalf of the Central American Governments, I submit for the Assembly's consideration the draft resolution on agenda item 40, entitled "The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development". This

draft resolution is contained in document A/51/L.18 and I would request that it be adopted by consensus.

As in previous years, this draft resolution is sponsored by a sizeable number of States Members of this Organization. I wish to express the gratitude and appreciation of Central America for their solidarity and support. The draft resolution reflects a shared vision among Central Americans about our reality. But it also contains our aspirations, our dreams — aspirations and dreams that now, as before, we want to share with the Assembly. We know that we can continue to count on the full support of the United Nations and its Members as we face the new challenges.

Mr. Escovar Salom (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The progress achieved in promoting peace in Central America shows without a doubt that the most appropriate way to solve conflicts is through negotiation. When negotiation predominates, chances are that positive results will be obtained, as witnessed by the events that have occurred there in recent years since the signing of the Esquipulas II Agreement in 1987, establishing the principles and procedures that were to guide the comprehensive peace process in the region.

The implementation of the obligations in this Agreement has contributed fundamentally to creating an atmosphere conducive to introducing to the societies of these countries the changes necessary to putting the era of armed confrontation behind us forever and to making way for new forms of cooperation and understanding among the different sectors of civilian life, founded on tolerance and the principle of pluralism.

We underscore the importance of pursuing endeavours to consolidate the objectives of peace, democracy, reconciliation and justice outlined in the agreements reached by the countries of the region. That process is not yet complete, but we should welcome with appreciation the encouraging progress made to date. The Central American Governments and the international community must jointly draft decisive policies to deal firmly with the aftermath of decades of violence. They must also address the problems caused by projects for economic restructuring that have entailed severe imbalances, which in turn tend to become new challenges to the countries of the region, despite the moderate economic growth resulting from those projects.

We have witnessed the consolidation of the basic elements of democratic systems. With the assistance of international organizations, changes to strengthen the electoral process; the human rights institutions and other civil organs have been made. The urgent challenge now is to face the difficulties caused by unemployment, social decay and poverty, as the Heads of State of the Central American countries have recognized on various occasions. Similarly, the United Nations Secretary-General, in his report in document A/51/338 of 9 September 1996, emphasizes the fact that there has been

> "little advance in the alleviation of widespread poverty or in the much needed creation of employment". (*A/51/338, para. 11*)

Accordingly, it will be necessary simultaneously to promote liberty, democracy and development, while maintaining a close relationship between them. Focusing on these three objectives from a comprehensive perspective will lead to the consolidation of peace and security in a region where conflicts have been caused by inequality. Understanding and solidarity in the international community must prevail so as to help strengthen the progress made to date in this regard. To that effect, two relevant events that clearly demonstrate the political will of the countries of the region to achieve those goals are the signing of the Alliance for Sustainable Development of Central America and the approval of the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America.

We express our satisfaction with the programmes and projects set forth in the frameworks of the following international mechanisms: the Central American European Union/Group of Three dialogue, the international financial institutions, United Nations bodies and the Organization of American States, bilateral initiatives, and those promoted in the context of the Groups of Friends. In that regard, I wish to highlight Venezuela's active participation in many of those efforts and particularly, those of the Groups of Friends, which have done outstanding work in the peace process in Central America.

In that context, Venezuela will continue to support endeavours to reach a just and lasting peace throughout the region. To that end, we will foster activities to maintain confidence and goodwill among all parties in order to pursue the regional peace process and will continue the programmes of economic and financial cooperation developed by Venezuela in the region with the aim of securing its economic growth, justice, full democratization and solidarity. Venezuela has been

particularly active and prominent in the development of programmes of economic and political solidarity, not only in Central America but in other regions also.

Mr. Nicholls (Colombia)(*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation speaks with great satisfaction on this item at a historic moment of the search for and consolidation of peace in Central America. The approaching completion of the implementation of the peace accords in El Salvador and the forthcoming signature of the peace agreements in Guatemala make 1996 a memorable year for the people of Central America and the entire hemisphere.

The progress made in the region in the struggle to leave behind a violent past is nothing short of spectacular. It is proof that peace is an attainable goal, even in scenarios most marked by confrontation, and that when there is a real will to achieve that goal, dialogue and negotiation form the best and only path.

As a member State of the Groups of Friends of the El Salvador and Guatemala peace processes, Colombia has had the privilege of observing at close range and the vast efforts of those two countries in the quest for peaceful coexistence, as well as the effective and transparent cooperation maintained with the United Nations throughout the process. For that reason, the signing of the peace agreements in Guatemala City on 29 December 1996 next will be a cause for pride and hope not only for the countries of Central America, but also for the international community as a whole, which has given its support to the positive outcome of the process through the United Nations. The Guatemalan peace process stands out as another success for the Organization in its function of supporting its Members' efforts in the search for peace.

It is also another example indicating that the essential element for success in the United Nations activities lies in its ability to focus its efforts on those tasks identified by the Members of the Organization with their free consent, it being understood that only through the will of the parties in conflict can a secure and lasting peace be achieved.

In El Salvador we welcome the fact that in spite of the difficulties and setbacks inherent in any process of this magnitude, the implementation of the commitments undertaken in the peace accords continues, to the point that a majority of them have been implemented. El Salvador finds itself today on the road to becoming an open participatory society in full development, thanks, among other factors, to its enormous efforts in implementing an ambitious agenda of change and achieving the agreed commitments related to the transfer of land and human settlements, the strengthening of the National Civilian Police, the modernization of the judicial and electoral systems, and the ratification of international instruments on human rights.

These are undeniably complex objectives that have required the support of all Salvadorian society and the Government of President Calderón Sol in particular, who has repeatedly demonstrated his unswerving commitment to guiding his country to become a democratic and peaceful society. Similarly, the vision and sincerity of the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) throughout the reconciliation process must be recognized.

We are fully confident that the Government will maintain the desire it has expressed to find solutions to commitments pending full implementation. We also wish to highlight the work of the United Nations Office of Verification (ONUV), which, despite infrastructure and personnel limitations resulting from the gradual reduction of the United Nations presence, has undertaken serious and appropriate activities, and the work of the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Alvaro de Soto, who, through his regular visits, has enabled the Organization to maintain a high-level presence in the verification of the Salvadorian process through to the end.

The peace agreements that the Government of Guatemala is preparing to sign with the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) will not only end one of the most painful and long-standing confrontations of the continent, but also, at the end of the chapter of the last of the Central American conflicts, show how anachronistic violence as a political weapon is, today more than ever. Peace among Guatemalans will be the product of a long and arduous process that has not been free of ups and downs, but that has always had the merit of interpreting the feeling and firm attitude of Guatemalan society, in the sense that only peace can remove the barriers that hamper its economic and social development. The progress made amid the serious difficulties of the past weeks attests to that.

We believe that this negotiation process, has been vigorous in its choice of basic themes and pragmatic in its operative aspects, and enjoys the legitimacy necessary to contribute to the construction of a new Guatemala. We wish to express our gratitude and admiration to President Alvaro Arzú for the patriotic and decisive manner in which he has advanced the peace negotiations. We

applaud the URNG for its vision and courageous and open attitude. We congratulate the United Nations mediation team on its intelligent and tireless efforts.

Like all reconciliation processes, the Guatemalan process will not be automatic and will require the cooperation of the international community, in accordance with the peace agreements, beginning with the deployment of an adequate military observer force to verify the ceasefire and demobilization. Similarly, the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) should be extended, so that it can continue to offer its cooperation in the area of verification of human rights in the same efficient way as in the past. My country has contributed civilian personnel to MINUGUA since the start of its activities and will definitely continue to do so.

Finally, I wish to express Colombia's satisfaction at being engaged in the exemplary Central American process in the search for peace, harmony and development, through the geographic and cultural bonds that unite us to the region, the close economic and diplomatic relations that we have with every Central American country, and our participation in the Group of Friends. I wish also to offer my country's collaboration in the future work of the region.

Mr. Baena-Soares (Brazil)(*interpretation from Spanish*): In the 13 years that this Organization has been dealing with the situation in Central America, this is the first time that it can be said that that region is at peace. More importantly, it is the first time in 30 years that we see a Central America that is not only at peace but one that is also firmly moving towards political stability and economic and social development.

The region is implementing a broad programme of reforms in the political, social and institutional spheres. At the same time, we see there a strong process of redemocratization. Elections in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua confirm this. We acknowledge with pleasure the joint statement issued last August by the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, which, by laying the foundation for a lasting peace in Guatemala, has brought an end to a painful chain of events in the history of Central American peoples.

Central America today is drawing closer to the other nations of Latin America on the road to democratization and institution-building. This is the culmination of the efforts of the Central American peoples and their elected Governments.

The foundation has been laid. However, we must now build everything that has been destroyed by both conflict and nature. There are still problems. The Governments of the region continue to demonstrate their commitments to peace, democracy, reconciliation and social justice. The international community has followed the situation closely through the sad period of crisis and violence, and it must now continue to lend its total support in time of peace in order to ensure that the achievements made so far may be secured.

In recent years the international community has followed the situation in Central America closely. It has been present throughout the long process of the region's pacification. At this moment of reconstruction, when the challenges of development are posing a real threat to the consolidation and success of Central American efforts, it is even more important that the international community make its presence felt.

Brazil believes that the goals of the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America and cooperation within the Central American Integration System are complementary and provide comprehensive guidelines for a strategy for Central America's political and social development. In this context, the work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other United Nations agencies is very important and should enjoy our full support.

Brazil has followed attentively the political process in Central America since the Sapoa Accord and the signature of the Esquipulas II commitments in 1987. In addition, we have participated fully in the efforts undertaken in the region by the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations. We have been present throughout the various phases of the OAS and United Nations Missions in El Salvador and Guatemala, and we will continue to lend our support to the fraternal nations of Central America.

We believe that never in recent years have the countries of Central America enjoyed such favourable conditions for developing their potential: peace has been established and Governments express the will of the people. Civil society is becoming organized and aware of the problems of development and social justice. Our support remains constant and will continue as progress moves forward throughout the region. For those reasons,

we are very pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/51/L.18, which is now before the Assembly.

Mr. Bjørn Lian (Norway): It is heartening to be able to note that the trend towards political democratization and normalization in Central America has been further consolidated since last year. Economically, efforts to make way for liberalization and restructuring are the order of the day, although widespread problems remain with regard to unemployment and the distribution of the benefits of reform. There is again reason to congratulate the Central Americans on their accomplishments, but at the same time it is necessary to retain a wholehearted commitment to further democratization, reconciliation and development. The continued support and solidarity of the international community remain necessary, but they will to a great extent depend on the will and ability of the Central American Governments to respond to the needs and aspirations of their own peoples.

It has now been officially announced that the internal armed conflict in Guatemala, which started 36 years ago, will come to an end through the signing of a final peace agreement in Guatemala City on 29 December. Norway warmly welcomes this announcement. Substantial advances have been made since the establishment of a new atmosphere of mutual trust between the negotiating parties in the wake of the elections a year ago. At that time, the Guatemalan people saw that peace was a real possibility. In this connection, Norway wishes to pay a tribute to the leadership of President Alvaro Arzú, who has managed to give the peace process a new impetus through a number of bold confidence-building initiatives that would have been unheard of before the elections.

The peace process in Guatemala has been actively encouraged, promoted and monitored by the international community. It was only after the United Nations was attributed a major role as a mediator in 1994 that tangible progress was made through the negotiating and signing of partial peace agreements. The efforts of the United Nations Moderator, Jean Arnault, who deserves the admiration of the Assembly for his unswerving dedication and patience, have been supported by the constructive action of the Group of Friends of the Guatemalan Peace Process.

The recent kidnapping incident appeared to put the peace process into question, but the Government as well as the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) clearly opted for peace, and we are pleased to note that partial agreements on pending issues such as the ceasefire, constitutional reform and the reintegration of URNG guerrillas into the political life of Guatemala will be signed in Oslo, Stockholm and Madrid respectively during the first half of December. We urge the parties to do their utmost to adhere to this programme.

The establishment and deployment of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) represents an immediate and extremely significant pillar in the construction of a new Guatemala. The presence of MINUGUA has given renewed hope to the civilian population that peace, justice, reconstruction and reconciliation may become realities in Guatemala. International monitoring activities should be maintained, and the Guatemalan authorities should act vigorously and wholeheartedly on the human rights recommendations that MINUGUA puts forward. It is the obvious duty of the international community to provide the necessary financial basis for the verification activities and human rights work carried out by MINUGUA.

Peace in Guatemala means more than the settlement of an internal armed conflict. With the signing of a peace agreement, a new phase of reconstruction and reconciliation should take over.
The first months of this phase will be vital, and international support, together with the Guatemalan authorities' own measures, will be indispensable. It will be particularly important to
ensure a controlled reintegration process for the former guerrilla commanders and fighters. Norway has taken the initiative to establish a peace fund which we hope will be administered by the office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Guatemala and for which a sum of $3 million has already been allocated. Provided that the Guatemalan Government itself does everything possible to promote reconciliation and development, continued solidarity from the international community could be instrumental in ensuring a good start for the new Guatemala and could thus prove to be a sound political investment.

The signing of the Chapultepec Agreement in El Salvador in 1992 initiated a fruitful process of peace-building to which the United Nations has contributed substantially. As a means to consolidate this process, Norway has supported the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), the Mission of the United Nations in El Salvador (MINUSAL) and the United Nations Office of Verification (ONUV) and has

participated in the training of the new National Civilian Police force.

Important parts of the Chapultepec Agreement are, however, still not fully implemented. This is notably the case for important issues such as judicial and electoral reforms and the distribution of land. Norway hopes that the Government of El Salvador will take the necessary measures to assure the implementation of the Peace Agreements in both letter and spirit.

The increasing political polarization, the level of poverty, the social antagonism and the public security situation in El Salvador continue to give rise to grave concern. New credible steps should now be taken to pursue more vigorously the political and social transformation on the national agenda. The problem of crime and violence emphasizes the need for adequate judicial instruments. We believe that a well organized independent police force which respects human rights is fundamental for the further consolidation of the peace process in El Salvador. We therefore strongly underline the need for the authorities of El Salvador to assure optimal conditions for the new National Civilian Police force so that it can be a positive instrument in the process of pacification and reconciliation.

The concern many have with regard to the implementation of the peace agreements should lead us to consider the question of an international presence after the expiry of the ONUV mandate by the end of this year. Norway believes that it is still too early for the international community to withdraw from El Salvador and that an international presence will still be required in order to monitor the ongoing process.

In the foreseeable future El Salvador will also need international development aid, and the international community should contribute. It is important, however, that the Government of El Salvador commit itself fully, and allocate adequate resources, to the implementation of the peace agreements.

The free and democratic elections held in October in Nicaragua were significant events indeed. The first transition period after the civil war was thus brought to an end. The high voter turnout in the elections was an encouraging sign that will further strengthen Nicaraguan democracy. The same can be said for the absence of violence in connection with the elections. We noted that international observers, such as the Organization of American States and the European Union, found no proof of fraud, although there had obviously been some shortcomings in the technical and practical aspects of the balloting. It is politically important, however, that, despite the irregularities, the overall impression is that these elections will contribute positively to the ongoing process of national reconciliation.

It is a matter of serious concern that Nicaragua is among the most indebted countries in the world and, even though Nicaragua has managed lately to reduce the debt substantially, the situation is far from being sustainable. We feel that continued support from the international community is required in order for Nicaragua to be able to develop further.

Nicaragua is Norway's only programme country in Latin America, and is thus the most important recipient of Norwegian development assistance on that continent. We are prepared to maintain the assistance to Nicaragua, but we would like to emphasize that international assistance can only be a supplement to national efforts to ensure continued positive progress in that country. We remain convinced that social and economic development is only possible when the political situation is stable. The attainment of such stability is the common responsibility of all political parties and relevant institutions in Nicaragua.

Mr. Castelli (Argentina) *(interpretation from Spanish):* My delegation is pleased to speak on agenda item 40, entitled "The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development".

We have studied the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/51/338 and share his positive view that for the first time in three decades the region is free from armed conflict, giving rise to institutional reforms that can make it possible for there to be new social and economic reform leading to sustainable development helped by support from the international community.

We join the appeal to all parties concerned to find a negotiated solution to the conflict in Guatemala in order to lay the foundations of a lasting peace in that country.

For decades, Central America has experienced repeated conflict and violence and has been afflicted by civil war and confrontation that left a well-known aftermath of social injustice, institutional fragility and economic disruption. The situation grew so serious that

towards the end of the 1980s there were some two million displaced persons and refugees, constituting no less than 10 per cent of the total population of Central America.

The signing of the Agreement known as Esquipulas II by the Presidents of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua on 7 August 1987 paved the way for direct participation in the peace process, thereby inaugurating the process of democratization and dialogue in those countries.

Fortunately, the Central American region was no exception to global trends that emerged at the end of the cold war or to those for building societies of peace, freedom, democracy and sustained and sustainable economic and social development, thus promoting integration processes.

Efforts to realize these interrelated objectives helped consolidate well-being and stability in the region and thus to establish the concept of representative democracy expressed in the Charter of the Organization of American States, which says that one of the essential purposes of the Organization of American States is to promote and consolidate representative democracy, with due respect for the principle of non-intervention, with a view to achieving the principles upon which it is founded and to comply with its regional agreements in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

The international community is aware that the Central American region is trying to lay to rest the painful process of internal conflict and is moving into a new stage of institutional and economic reconstruction. If this process is to be consolidated, the express will of the peoples of the region and their leaders is paramount, but it must be buttressed by the cooperative solidarity of other countries. They can channel their assistance through financial, multilateral and bilateral support capable of generating investment and, consequently, growth.

Within the context of assistance, it is particularly important that the necessary international aid be given to democratic consolidation processes, thereby providing the economic and technical assistance needed to deal with the aftermath of conflicts and their painful repercussions.

My country is clearly committed to this philosophy. It has given concrete proof of that commitment in the peace process and in such initiatives as the signing of agreements on technical cooperation in the areas of human resources, agriculture, forestry, fishing and energy, and the renegotiation of external debt, particularly the national debt.

In this connection, special reference should be made to the Argentine Fund for Horizontal Cooperation, an instrument that was drawn up by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Argentina and financed with our own resources to provide technical cooperation in priority areas for the beneficiary countries. This programme was implemented quickly and efficiently and demonstrated the political will of the Argentine Government to strengthen its relations with the region and to cooperate in its economic and institutional development.

I should also like to mention our military and civilian participation in peacekeeping operations in the region, such as the United Nations Observer Group in Central America, the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador and the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala. We have made specific contributions in the areas of human rights and electoral assistance.

In this spirit, we reiterate our commitment to the Central American region, whose peoples are so closely related to our own. We hope that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Albin (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Central American region has pride of place in Mexico's international undertakings. We are joined to the countries of Central America by historic and cultural bonds that we are seeking to strengthen. Political dialogue is improving all the time and we hope to enhance our economic relations to our mutual benefit. That is why we are paying particular attention to developments in the region. The strengthening of the region's institutions and the enrichment of its political life underpin the objectives of peace, freedom, democracy and development that we all want to promote.

One of the most outstanding developments that has occurred since the General Assembly considered this item last year has been the strengthening of the peace process in Guatemala. The Government of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) signed the Agreement on social and economic aspects and the agrarian situation in Mexico City on 6 May 1996 and the Agreement on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and on the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society on

19 September 1996. The signing of those Agreements marks significant progress along the road to peace.

These broad-based efforts were given what we hope will be a decisive boost on 11 November 1996, when the Government of Guatemala and the URNG agreed to go to Stockholm in the first two weeks of December to sign an agreement on constitutional reforms and the electoral system and to Madrid to sign an agreement on the bases for reintegrating the URNG into political life. An agreement on substantive aspects of a final ceasefire agreement was also reached and the process will culminate with the signing of a firm and lasting peace agreement on 29 December 1996 in Guatemala.

The political will of both parties has been a decisive element in achieving these goals. We would like warmly to congratulate them on their determination and dedication. We trust that this spirit of cooperation will lead them successfully to conclude their negotiations and thereby secure the peace that Guatemalan society has dreamt of for so long. We would also like to put on record our satisfaction with the work of the United Nations Moderator of the Peace Talks.

The extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala this April demonstrates the international community's political support for the peace process in Guatemala. We agree with the Secretary-General's statement in his report that the international community and the United Nations in particular must be prepared to support Guatemala after the signing of a final peace agreement. We believe that political support in response to the request and with respect for the wishes of the Guatemalan people will be an essential political contribution to consolidating peace in that Central American country, which has already experienced 36 years of conflict.

El Salvador has made important steps towards securing the peace that it has taken so many years to achieve. El Salvador is now living proof of how dialogue and negotiation are particularly well suited to settling differences and to showing the value of political will in enabling the transition from the upheaval of war to a democratic and peaceful society. It is also one of the most successful examples of the United Nations contribution to conflict settlement. Support provided by the United Nations Office of Verification is of paramount importance now that the peace agreements are in their final phase. Mexico will continue to support the efforts of the people of El Salvador to consolidate peace and encourages the adoption of measures needed to ensure the earliest, best and most fitting conclusion of this process soon.

We are also aware of the efforts that Nicaraguan society has made to preserve peace and offset the damage caused by war and natural disaster. International support to consolidate progress in the long term will continue to be of the greatest importance. Mexico will continue to cooperate bilaterally with Nicaragua and participate in the Support Group.

There is a new spirit in Central America. It is not merely the absence of war; it is the will of peoples and Governments to build a future of well-being. We have seen important Central American initiatives adopted at the highest levels in recent years. These include the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America, the Central American Environmental Summit for Sustainable Development, the International Conference on Peace and Development in Central America, the Social Integration Treaty, the Central American Democratic Security Model and the Programme for Regional Action for the Development of Tourism in Central America.

We are convinced that progress in the political and institutional areas in Central America can be consolidated only if they are accompanied by similar progress in economic development and by considerable reconstruction of the social fabric in those countries.

Mexico and Central America have a long-standing tradition of cooperation, which has been strengthened in recent years. We have worked together in political, economic, commercial, financial, scientific, technical, educational and cultural areas. This has been done with an awareness of the need to rehabilitate and reconstruct societies that have been afflicted by war. The establishment of the Mexican Commission for Cooperation with Central America in November 1990, and the implementation of the Mexican programme for cooperation with Central America have considerably increased cooperation between Mexico and the countries of the region in recent years. This marks a comprehensive effort by the Mexican Government to address the new realities in the area.

The peace dividend is, and should be, greater than that of war. The essential steps that countries have taken to secure peace, and the efforts they have initiated to rebuild their economies and reach higher levels of well-

being for their peoples must be supported by the international community. The region needs financial resources and technical support to rebuild its economic and social structures, with a view to ensuring that they will be able to establish and consolidate their institutions.

Just last October, the second meeting of Heads of State on Government of Central America and of Mexico — "Tuxtla II" — was held. At that meeting our representatives adopted a plan of action and defined a machinery for dialogue and coordination to launch projects and support actions in favour of the sustainable development of the area.

Mexico will continue to contribute to efforts by Central American nations to build a region of peace, democracy and development. We will do this in the best spirit and in the areas which Central Americans themselves define.

Mr. Fuentealba (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My country views with great interest the establishment of firm and lasting peace in Central America, together with the growing consolidation of a democratic system in each of the countries of the region. In this context, we value the steps that Central American leaders and Governments have taken to achieve the goals which have been put forward in this area.

We warmly welcome the agreement between the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, as this makes it possible to envisage a lasting peace in that country.

We welcome the constitutional reforms adopted by the legislative assembly of El Salvador.

We enthusiastically applaud the recent successful culmination of the electoral process in Nicaragua, which made possible another presidential election and the reconstitution of its legislative body.

We emphasize the valuable and decisive contribution of the Governments of Costa Rica and Honduras, to the various initiatives undertaken to date to declare Central America a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development.

Our nation went 17 years without freedom, democracy, dignity, justice or equity. We know what this means and how much suffering it brings. We learned that one has to break definitively the vicious cycle of alternating authoritarianism and democracy, and that there is only one legitimacy: the one that respects human rights and decides matters according the rule of the majority, in honest elections. We have also learned that democracy is impossible where deadlines exist in the absence of goals, which is akin to waiting for the arrival of a future paradise which never comes.

At the opening of the recent sixth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, on 10 November, the President of my country, Mr. Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle stated that,

> "We have made much progress in recent years. Even in the poorest and most remote places, our citizens are calling for better, more honest judges; they are asking politicians to be more serious and more devoted to public service. At varying paces, power is becoming decentralized throughout the region. Mayors, governors and officials are increasingly acting upon the will of citizens. Decentralization is a lengthy road that leads towards self-government and participatory management. Citizens are calling for efficiency, probity and diligence from administrations. This is a democratic demand which goes beyond the pure functional logic of authoritarian power. People know that dictatorships are not more effective than democracies in providing basic goods and fundamental services.
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> "Let us sincerely acknowledge that we have to embark upon a lengthy path to educate children and adolescents in civic culture and to strengthen in the adults the norms of democratic ethics and sensibilities. Schools, the media and especially the family must take up this mission. Nobody can replace the teaching of the essentials of democracy: the love of truth and respect for one's neighbours, society and nature.
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> "Throughout South America there is a debate on the institutional reconstruction of democracy. Political systems, constitutions, the executive, legislative and judicial branches, the space regime and political parties are all being subjected to careful examination to adapt them to new demands. This institutional resurgence is genuine and deep-seated, and breaks the classic mould of our history, which oscillated between legislative furour and inertia and anachronism.

> "The leaders and the citizens of our countries are increasingly coming to understand that governance requires legitimacy and efficiency. We have progressed because our countries abhor governance without accountability, which subjugates citizens to serve the power of the State. There is no real governance without democratic legitimacy — or without achieving development."

Democracy cannot be imposed, nor does it emerge magically as a result of the harsh punishments which some try to impose on the basis of their views or attitudes, and which overlook the difficult realities that must be dealt with in order for this system of liberty and dignity to take root, flower, and grow progressively stronger within our societies. No country has the right to give orders, much less to use threats and coercion to force us to espouse their views. Peoples determine their own destiny, and that is exactly what Central American societies have done.

As a small developing country, we value in-depth dialogue and cooperation which should be increased and intensified. Accordingly, we are striving to consolidate our strong and undying ties of friendship with Central America. In the same vein, we are attempting to cooperate with the region in its struggle against poverty, in the modernization of State administration, in the strengthening of parliaments, and in increasing trade and economic flows.

In this connection, and on the occasion of the Central American summit held in Costa Rica in July 1996, a high-level commission was established to negotiate a free trade agreement between my country and Central America. This commission will deal with four broad areas: economic liberalization, investment, service and cooperation. Chile has also entered into investment promotion and protection agreements with Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, in addition to the existing one with Costa Rica. We emphasize these initiatives, as they are clear indicators of the political and democratic stability of our future business partners.

Our leaders, including those of Central America, made a firm commitment in the Viña del Mar Declaration to strengthen our democratic institutions and culture; to improve the quality of political life and associated behaviours and customs; to modernize public administration and support decentralization; to create the necessary conditions to increase social equity; and to consolidate the socio-economic foundations that will allow for the achievement of a comprehensive democracy and enable us to make the most of the opportunities offered by globalization. Strengthening and consolidating democracy in Central America requires a considerable collective effort.

The draft resolution before us today, in our view, contains the necessary elements to fashion Central America into a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development. For this reason, Chile joins in its appeal to the international community and the United Nations system, and in particular to the United Nations Development Programme, to continue to support the efforts of the Central American leaders to improve the well-being of their citizens. Chile, for its part, as a sponsor of this draft resolution, reiterates its commitment to Central America and its future.

Mr. Owada (Japan): In recent years, the countries of Central America have been making remarkable progress in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. Owing to their firm commitment to the principles of democracy and open markets, peoples throughout the region are enjoying political stability and increasing prosperity. It is incumbent upon the international community to continue to assist their efforts for democratization, protection of human rights and economic stability. Japan remains committed to doing its part in helping to ensure that the peoples of those countries can look forward to pursuing their livelihoods in a stable and democratic society.

In extending economic cooperation to the region, Japan attaches special importance to three areas, namely, social development, capacity-building on a human level and the promotion of an economic infrastructure, while paying particular attention to the relationship between development and the environment. It also places emphasis on projects that contribute to the region as a whole, such as those that promote tourism, an area rich in potential for all Central American States. In the past five years, my Government has almost quadrupled its economic and technical cooperation to the region, from $55 million in 1990 to $200 million in 1995.

As part of its efforts to strengthen its relations with the countries of Central America and to enhance mutual understanding, Japan hosted in Tokyo this past July the Second Japan Central America Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation with six Central American States. On that occasion, Japan renewed its commitment to support the commendable efforts of the Central American countries themselves towards democratization, sustainable development, economic reform and the modernization of

State institutions. Specifically, Japan announced that next year it plans to extend cooperation for a regional waste management programme and to convene a seminar to assist countries in developing their tourist industry.

Moreover, in August this year, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto visited the region, where he met with the heads of seven States, including Belize, and reaffirmed the intention to build a new partnership between Japan and the Central American States. He expressed the hope that the region would continue to make progress towards stable and sustainable development and, in that regard, stressed the importance of the electoral process in Nicaragua and progress in the Guatemalan peace process. This visit to Central America, the first by a Japanese Head of Government, is but one more demonstration of Japan's determination to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the region.

This year has seen gratifying progress in Guatemala, where the peace process has reached a final stage. Japan strongly hopes that agreement on a peace settlement will be finalized on 29 December as scheduled. On behalf of the Government of Japan, I should like to pay high tribute to all those who have worked towards that goal. In particular, the activities of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala deserve special commendation. I might add that Japan extended a contribution of $100,000 to the Organization of American States (OAS) in support of the 1995 presidential election in Guatemala as a token of its support for that country's ongoing democratization process.

Recent developments in Nicaragua confirm that the democratic process is taking firm hold there as well. Particularly encouraging in this regard is the fact that the presidential election conducted on 20 October was deemed to have been free and fair. The Government of Japan wholeheartedly welcomes this development as convincing evidence of the growing trend towards democracy in Nicaragua. As a measure of the importance Japan attaches to the democratization process in Nicaragua, the Government of Japan extended over $710,000 to the Supreme Electoral Council and to the OAS in support of the election.

The draft resolution (A/51/L.18) before us commends and supports the efforts of the Central American countries to consolidate peace and promote sustainable development. As these are objectives to which Japan is firmly committed, my delegation has decided to cosponsor the draft. The delegation of Japan strongly hopes that the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Uruguay believes that the item before us is one of the most important on the agenda of the United Nations, as it relates to the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in a huge area of the American continent — Central America — and its transformation into a region of peace, liberty, democracy and development.

The General Assembly has been considering this item for many years. A long a productive road has been travelled, from the Esquipulas Agreements to the most recent accords, such as the Agreement on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and on the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society, signed on 19 September 1996 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico by the Peace Commission of the Government of Guatemala and the general command of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG).

Uruguay — a country that loves peace and dialogue and has deep-rooted democratic feelings — has offered all its solidarity and support to this process, both on an individual basis and in the context of various forums, in particular, as a member first, of the Support Group of the Contadora Group, and afterwards, when that became the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action — or the Rio Group, as it was called and is known — established in December 1986 at the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Group of Eight in the beautiful city of Rio de Janeiro.

Our country has always contended that a firm and lasting peace in Central America, as in any other part of the world, can be achieved only through dialogue between the parties on the basis of strict observance of the broad principles underlying the United Nations and the Organization of American States: non-intervention, respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States, and the non-use of force and of the territory of a State to infringe the sovereignty and independence of others, wherever they may be, in Latin America or elsewhere in the world.

That is why we view with great satisfaction the progress being made to achieve peace. Together with our brother countries in Central America, we rejoice in what we consider to be the achievement of an initial goal: the end of war. There have been nightmarish times of sadness

that have caused our people suffering and left physical and psychological wounds that will not be easy to heal. That is precisely the issue that must be stressed by the new stage of recovery that must begin in Central America. Uruguay is ready today, as in the past, to do its utmost to ensure that our brother peoples will have a happy future.

We believe that one of the principal aims of the United Nations Charter has been achieved: the establishment of peace. Now comes the more difficult stage: the maintenance of this peace. We have repeatedly said in this forum that, while the maintenance of peace and security is one of the fundamental principles of the Charter, it is not the only one. There can be no peace without development and no development without peace. That is why we welcome with deep conviction efforts that simultaneously consolidate peace and promote development.

We fully share the concern of the Presidents of the countries of Central America who, in the Declaration of San Salvador II, acknowledged that the scale of unemployment, social disintegration and poverty were such that they had to be addressed as a matter of the utmost urgency. Similarly, we are gratified to note the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America, adopted by the Presidents of Central America in Managua, as well as efforts made in the area of economic integration.

Uruguay has always understood that the root of the problem in Central America, as is surely the case in other war zones of the world, is not solely political in nature, but also — perhaps mainly — economic and sociocultural. Uruguay is a country whose people are deeply convinced that the democratic system of Government is the best mechanism that human beings have invented to enable people to live at peace with themselves and their neighbours. We believe, however, that it is not only a form of Government, but also a way of life through which the rule of law, respect for the rights of others, freedom, human rights and the security of citizens can be fully achieved.

Liberty is not possible without democracy; development is not possible without liberty. Full security for citizens is not possible without a clear separation of power between the executive, the legislature and a clearly independent judiciary. However, all this can be achieved only if there is a solid educational base. Democracy must be built on a solid cultural foundation and on the principle of freedom of education, which includes not only the freedom to teach — academic freedom — but also the freedom of the student to choose.

Full freedom, the exercise of democratic governance, the full application of human rights, respect for the rights of others and peaceful coexistence cannot flourish if they are not planted in fertile ground. That is why we view with great satisfaction the establishment of the Culture of Peace Programme, initiated in El Salvador by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which will be followed in other countries of Central America, as the Secretary-General made clear in his report to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

It is for this reason that we believe that the United Nations Development Programme and UNESCO should play a greater role in cooperation for eduction; including at the primary and secondary levels. Today's young people will be the leaders of tomorrow and must train and prepare to live in a democracy, which is a synonym of liberty.

The example of Central America should help us to define the concept of the United Nations that we seek for the future. We do not want a United Nations whose job is merely to silence the guns once they have begun to fire. We want a United Nations that will take preventive action, which is why the Central American example should be edifying. Development activities — not only economic, but also sociocultural development — should be one of the priorities of the United Nations of the future. If we succeed in that, peacekeeping operations will become unnecessary.

Mr. Hoey (Ireland): The European Union follows with close interest the situation in Central America. The last year has seen significant progress towards the consolidation of firm and lasting peace in the region and towards its transformation into a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development. The signature next month of the peace agreement for Guatemala will mean that, for the first time in nearly three decades, Central America will find itself without armed conflict.

The Esquipulas process was instrumental in bringing about peaceful resolutions of the various armed conflicts that had devastated different countries in the region. The participation of the international community, through a significant presence of the United Nations and the useful work of Groups of Friends, has contributed significantly to the positive outcome of the peace process. The European Union shares the view of the Secretary-General that present circumstances place the countries of Central America in a favourable position from which to pursue

economic growth, social justice and further democratization.

Despite recent achievements, important steps still need to be taken in Guatemala and El Salvador. The inauguration of Mr. Alvaro Arzú as President of Guatemala in January this year marked a turning point in the peace process in Guatemala. His pledge to continue negotiations with the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) was followed by the latter's suspension of offensive military operations and the ending of the army's counter-insurgency operations. Since then, intensive negotiations have led to the signature of several important agreements containing commitments by both parties relating to the future governance of the country.

We welcome the agreement reached by the Government of Guatemala and the URNG to continue the negotiation process with a view to concluding and signing a lasting peace agreement in Guatemala in December. We urge them to take all necessary measures to achieve this objective and to put a complete end to the conflict that has so severely affected the country. The end of the conflict will enable the Government and the people of Guatemala to turn their attention to the consolidation of the rule of law, further democratization, and the promotion of economic recovery. This is essential if civilian power is to be strengthened and the armed forces placed under civilian control. Central to this process will be the continuation of efforts to eradicate impunity and to achieve the full compliance of all parties to their commitments under the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights.

The European Union considers that the United Nations has contributed actively and positively to the Guatemala peace process, helping and encouraging the parties to reach a firm and lasting peace, through national reconciliation, in order to allow the establishment of the foundations of democracy and development in a climate of liberty and justice. The activities of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) have been fundamental to the United Nations action, and have helped ensure compliance, notably with the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights. We call on all parties to implement in full MINUGUA's recommendations. We consider that the United Nations, including MINUGUA, will continue to play a crucial role in verifying the implementation of the various agreements reached between the parties and to assist the parties in complying with them. MINUGUA should cooperate closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in institution-building and in the strengthening of the administration of justice.

In El Salvador, the peace process has maintained its impetus and contributed significantly to the consolidation of a democratic order, the rule of law and respect for human rights. In July, the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador approved a package of constitutional reforms which had been recommended by the Commission on the Truth, and adopted the Police Career Law. The European Union considers, however, that in a number of areas the implementation of the Peace Accords remains incomplete. In particular, further reform is needed in the field of public security, including the institutional development of the National Civilian Police and the National Academy of Public Security, institutions to which the European Union is providing technical and financial assistance. Further efforts are also required to bring about electoral reform.

The European Union is pleased that the recent elections in Nicaragua were held peacefully. We call on all parties to continue to work towards the consolidation of democracy in that country.

The European Union has considered the report of the Secretary-General of 9 September 1996 on the situation in Central America. We agree with him that the pursuit of economic growth, social justice and further democratization will need to be approached with the same dedication and sense of urgency that was brought to bear on the resolution of civil war and regional tensions. In this context, we want to encourage the Secretary-General to continue coordinating and stimulating United Nations assistance for the economic and social development of Central America, through ongoing programmes and through support for the regional initiatives to promote greater integration.

Two of these initiatives are particularly important. The Alliance for Sustainable Development provides a framework for efforts at development in Central America, with an emphasis on collective efforts to reduce poverty through social integration, human development and investment in human capital, while recognizing the importance of environmental protection. In December of last year, the Presidents of Central America approved a Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America. This Treaty bases the Central American Democratic Security Model on the supremacy and strengthening of the power of civil society; a reasonable balance of forces; the security of individuals and their property; the elimination of poverty and extreme poverty;

the promotion of sustainable development; the protection of the environment; the eradication of violence, corruption, impunity, terrorism and trafficking in drugs and arms; and the increasing channelling of resources into social investment. The Treaty also contains important confidence-building measures in the military and security fields. Given the record of military tension in the region over many decades, the importance of this Treaty is self-evident.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to continue supporting the integration process in Central America as well as the new efforts to invigorate the integral development of the region. The San José dialogue has proved to be a lively mechanism of exchange and mutual understanding between the European Union and the countries of Central America. This dialogue has been adapted and strengthened to reflect the developments which have taken place in both regions in recent years. The process of renewing and adapting the San José dialogue to the new circumstances culminated with the solemn Declaration of Florence in March 1996. On that occasion, both sides reaffirmed their resolve to continue the political and economic dialogue initiated in 1984 by the San José Ministerial Conference, adjusting the mechanisms of the dialogue to the new circumstances and focusing cooperation on a number of priority areas with a view to enhancing its impact and effectiveness. These areas were, first, support for strengthening the rule of law and modernizing public administration, and secondly, support for social policies and for national policies to alleviate the social cost of structural adjustment measures, consolidation of the Central American Integration System, and strengthening Central America's capacity for integration into the international economy, including its economic ties with the European Union.

Furthermore, the European Union continues to stress the importance of respect for human rights in its relations with Central America and encourages the efforts aimed at improving the situation in this field. In this context, I would like to recall that the European Union and its Member States, taken as a whole, are the main donor in the area of cooperation for the region.

The European Union trusts that the coming months will see the consolidation of the achievements reached in favour of durable peace, democracy and development. To do this, the assistance, solidarity and support of the international community will be essential. The European Union will continue to play an active role in these efforts.

Mr. Leblanc (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): It is with satisfaction that Canada notes the considerable progress made in Central America during the past year. With the continuing assistance of the United Nations, El Salvador has implemented nearly all the commitments made under the Peace Accords. The Government and the people are increasingly turning their efforts to the development of their society and economy. They deserve and will have the cooperation and assistance of the international community, including Canada.

Just a few weeks ago, Nicaragua held free elections with a high level of participation by political groupings and the population. We hope that, during the peaceful transition from one administration to the next, all Nicaraguans will unite to deal constructively with the important developmental challenges they face. They can be confident that Canadians will continue to work with them, as we have for many years. Canada is pleased to have taken part in the work of the support group for Nicaragua and will continue to do so.

Canada welcomes with pleasure the substantial progress towards a final peace accord in Guatemala. We particularly appreciate the political will and the spirit of compromise on the part of the Government of President Alvaro Arzú and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity, which have made this achievement possible. We look forward eagerly to the signature of the peace accords in the coming weeks. We also applaud and support the efforts of the Guatemalan authorities, the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala and others to end human rights violations and impunity. Canada is currently giving careful attention to the ways in which we can support the implementation of the peace accords and the future development of Guatemala.

(spoke in English)

The peoples and Governments of Central America deserve our warmest congratulations for these achievements. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General and the staff of the Secretariat and other organs of the United Nations system for their important contributions to the realization of our common goals in Central America. We would like to acknowledge in particular the essential contributions of the United Nations Moderator of the Guatemala Peace Talks and his team, the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala, the Mission of the United Nations in El Salvador — now the United

Nations Office of Verification — as well as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

As part of our policy of greater involvement in our own hemisphere and in response to the many positive trends in Central America, Canada has increased its own activity in the region. We share with Central Americans many goals: peace, democracy, observance of human rights, human security and sustainable development. We actively support Central America's efforts towards regional integration and finding common solutions to the challenges it faces. This increased cooperation was made manifest during the recent visit to Canada in May 1996 of the Presidents of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua and the Prime Minister of Belize to meet Prime Minister Chrétien and senior members of his Cabinet. This visit resulted in agreement and common initiatives in a number of political, security, social and economic areas and was followed in September by a return visit to Guatemala by the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for Latin America.

My country looks forward to the continuation of this growing relationship. We believe that Central America continues to be an example for the international community of the ways in which, through cooperation, we can achieve the goals set out in the Charter of United Nations.

Mr. Robinson (United States of America): In the decade since the historic meeting of Central American Presidents at Esquipulas, the political landscape of Central America has been transformed. Since that historic meeting in 1987, the United Nations has played an important role in moving the region from war to peace. During the past year, the nations of Central America have made further impressive strides toward peace, reconciliation and sustainable development.

Following in the footsteps of Nicaragua and El Salvador, the Government of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity will sign an agreement on 29 December 1996 to bring an end to Central America's oldest conflict. After 36 years of civil strife, the people of Guatemala will at long last know true peace. This achievement would not have been possible without the United Nations. The United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights, in Guatemala and the work of Moderator Jean Arnault have provided essential support to the Guatemalan peace process, giving the parties the confidence needed to reach a final agreement.

We are proud to have supported the parties, along with the other members of the Group of Friends, during the negotiating process. We will stand with the Guatemalan people in peace, providing substantial assistance to Guatemala for implementation of the commitments in the peace accords, which will help achieve economic development, social equality and a better life for all Guatemalans.

With the assistance of the United Nations, the Government of El Salvador and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front will have made enormous progress in the implementation of the 1992 Chapultepec Accord. The efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Office of Verification have made a singular contribution to the construction of a new, bright future for the Salvadorian people. During the past year, the Salvadorian Government, with the passage of key constitutional reforms, has taken another important step in completing the process begun in 1992. The United States urges the parties to the Chapultepec Accord to redouble their efforts to complete the few remaining aspects of the Accord.

On 20 October, the people of Nicaragua again demonstrated their commitment to democracy by electing a new President and legislature. These successful elections would not have been possible without the support of the Organization of American States and the United Nations and its agencies. We are confident that the newly-elected Alemán Administration will fulfil the aspirations of the Nicaraguan people to consolidate democracy, promote reconciliation and rebuild the nation's economy.

The United States is further heartened by the efforts of the people and Governments of Central America to work together to promote sustainable development, to cooperate in fighting the common security threats, to work together to promote trade and tourism, and, finally, to lower the barriers to trade within the region. Those are the steps that will ensure the successful future of the peoples of Central America.

Mr. Laing (Belize): There is no doubt whatever that Central America is firmly on the road to lasting peace and progress. Two years ago, during the debate on this agenda item, the delegation of Belize reminded the Assembly that Central America is a delicate filigree isthmus. That

remains the case. That narrow bridge between the two New World continents continues to be fragile. That slender barrier between the world's two greatest oceans still resembles a beautiful but delicate woman's pendant.

But that fragile and delicate area is one which is so crucial and central for the welfare of this planet that, happily, it has continued to receive the support it deserves from this great Organization and from the international community. For that, the delegation of Belize, a vitally affected regional country, gives its heartfelt thanks.

Of course, that support would be useless if the actors in the region did not make determined efforts to attain the peace, prosperity and enhanced welfare for which our peoples and all peoples have so long yearned. Those efforts have been at the national and regional levels.

As regards the national level, my delegation must particularly congratulate the respective parties and the United Nations Secretariat for the important impending agreements between the Guatemalan Government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG).

As far as the regional level is concerned, the States of our isthmus must also be congratulated for their tireless efforts of cooperation and harmonious action. Those efforts must be intensified. All States in the isthmus must redouble their efforts to help themselves and each other. Since everything in our small isthmus affects all our citizens and consumes all our resources, regardless of boundaries, each and every diverse element must be harnessed. Historic Central America, the wider geographical Central America, and the Caribbean and still wider Central American areas must work in lockstep to bring to the peoples of the area the peace, freedom, democracy and sustainable development that they all deserve.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. I would like to inform Member States that, in order to allow the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee to review the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/51/L.18, action on the draft resolution will be taken at a later date to be announced.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.